LABOR CHALLENGE – **1973** – **One article by Ross Dowson** *& Maria Fischer, including five Riddell leadership split convention reports)*

05_07th-1a **LC #78** 1973 (5 pp) Canadian revolutionists meet *(Congrès 1973 Convention LSA/LSO Special Feature by Dick Fidler)*

05_07th-1b* *(continuation)* 'Democratic discussion' *(however many key issues not discussed or clarified before a few months prior to convention)*; 'Against Canadian nationalism' *(Riddell leadership does an about-turn on longstanding movement position on Canadian nationalist sentiment just before convention)*

05_07th-1c LSA/LSO convention *(continuation)* 'Tendencies formed'

05_07th-1d *(continuation)* leading spokespersons of the RCT given time to make counter-reports

05_07th-e* Canadian nationalism vital to capitalist rule *(John Riddell report on PC resolution outlines sharp turnaround in movement policy)*

07_09th-1a **LC #82** LSA deplores split in Trotskyist ranks, by Art Young on split of 25 members of the RCT *(organizational aspects only)*

07_09th-1b 'Unity attempt fails' *(between LSA and [ultraleft]* Old Mole *and Red Circle tendencies);* 'RMG supports split' *(a strictly organizational report devoid of any political differences involved)*

12_17th **LC #92** Obit: Joe Burki, pioneer revolutionary socialist, by Maria Fischer with R.D.

<u>Ross Dowson -- Labor Challenge</u> articles -- 1974

02_04th **LC #94** "The NDP – The Marxist View" ('In Review' column) by Ray Warden *(pamphlet based on PC resolution of April 1973 LSA convention, reflecting Riddell leadership turn on longstanding policy of LSA towards the Canadian labor party):* "…a welcome explanation *(sic)* of the barrier to socialism constituted by the NDP leadership…" *(which also includes quotes from a speech by Ross Dowson, who regarded this pamphlet`s positions as a fundamental revision of the views he propounded and the LSA functioned with up until Spring 1973.)*

03_18th **LC #97** 18 members of LSA/LSO announce resignation, by John Riddell, largely veteran members who included Ross Dowson, Chairman, organized as the "United Tendency" *(This report, unlike that dealing with split of RMG [07-09th-1973], outlines the political differences between the Riddell leadership and the UT.)*

Canadian revolutionists mee

by DICK FIDLER

The convention of the League for Socialist Action/ Ligue Socialiste Ouvriere met in Toronto over Easter weekend, April 20-23. It was the largest policy convention in the history of the Canadian Trotskyist movement. Of the more than 300 persons who registered, 53 were delegates elected from 12 branches in cities from Vancouver to Montreal, and 34 were alternate delegates. In addition, 29 members of the outgoing Central Committee attended as consultative delegates.

There were over 50 guests and observers from other countries.

The LSA/ LSO is the Canadian section of the Fourth International, the world party of socialist revolution founded by Leon Trotsky in 1938.

The League is working to assemble the cadres of the future mass revolutionary party that alone can lead the struggles of the Canadian working class to victory through the winning of state power and the socialist transformation of society on an international scale. Members of the League are active in all aspects of the class struggle in Canada, playing a leading role in the women's liberation movement, the anti-war movement, student struggles, building the left wing of the New Democratic Party and class struggle caucuses of militants in the trade unions, intervening in the Quebecois nationalist movement, etc. Their concerns were reflected in the colorful banners that adorned the convention hall in the King Edward Sheraton Hotel: "U.S. Out of Southeast Asia," "Pour Un Quebec Independant et Socialiste," "Abortion: A Woman's Right to Choose," "Defend Latin-American Political Prisoners" and "Vive la Quatrieme Internationale."

The credentials committee reported that 19 delegates were active in the NDP, 13 in women's liberation (almost 40 percent of the delegates were women), 10 were active mainly on campus, nine in antiwar work, five (not including teachers) in trade union work. Sixteen delegates were also members of the Young Socialists / Ligue des Jeunes Socialistes, which is in political solidarity with the LSA/ LSO.

While discussing these areas of the League's work, and setting plans to expand its intervention in them, this convention focussed on defining and clarifying the position of the Canadian Trotskyist movement on a number of important questions, including the current internal discussion in the Fourth International, and an assessment of the

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nature of the current radicalization and the challenges it poses for Canadian revolutionists.

On many key questions, minority views in opposition to those of the majority of the leadership were expressed.

DEMOGRATIC DISCUSSION

The convention was preceded by the longest, most thoroughly documented discussion period in the history of the Canadian section. In the space of 11 months, some 58 editions of the English-language Internal Discussion Bulleting were published, containing 91 literary contributions — for a total of 1,665 pages of typewritten material and approximately 675,000 words. Of this, about half was comprised of minority views in opposition to the line resolutions submitted by the Political Committee (PC). Organized minorities fully exercised their rights to tour party branches to present their views to the membership.

In addition, sixteen editions of the French-language internal bulletin were published, with contributions totaling some 160,000 words.

A sophisticated electronic system of simultaneous translation ensured that all convention proceedings were conducted in both languages.

The convention opened with a report on the world Trotskyist movement, presented by Art Young, organizational secretary, for the Political Committee. He reported on the progress of the current discussions within the Fourth International preparatory to the Fourth World Congress since Reunification. Pointing to the work of the national sections in a number of countries, the reported mentioned in particular the intervention of the Ligue Communiste in the recent student upsurge in France. He hailed the breakthrough in Argentina of the Trotskyist Partido Socialista de los Trabajadores (PST — Socialist Workers party). Illegal and underground only two years ago, the cadres of the present PST have used their intervention in the recent national elections under the Lanusse military dictatorship to project a revolutionary class struggle program, and to register an impressive increase in the party's membership, organization, and influence in the Argentine working class.

DETENTE ANALYZED

The Political Report, presented by Dick Fidler for the Political Committee, began with a survey of the international conjuncture. The report pointed to a turn in the world political situation marked by Nixon's visits to Moscow and Peking, the resulting "detente" between imperialism and the workers states, and the success of this combination of imperialists and Stalinist bureaucrats in forcing the Vietnamese revolution to yield major concessions in its liberation struggle.

Not the least of these concessions is the provision in the Accords for a supervisory force with Canadian participation to oversee the ceasefire, a clear violation of the Vietnamese peoples' right of self-determination. The convention reaffirmed the commitment of anadian Trotskyists to campaign for an immediate end to imperialist intervention in Southeast Asia, for withdrawal of Canadian forces and an end to Canada's complicity in the war.

"Imperialism has gained a breathing space" with the detente, the report noted. But while serious setbacks have been experienced in some sectors, particularly the colonial revolution, there have been advances elsewhere.

"These developments belie any schema of general reversal of the underlying trends of the past decade, one of general radicalization and ferment. There are elements of profound instability in the present situation, not least the continuing dilemma of U.S. and world imperialism in Southeast Asia, and — most significant — the continued thrust forward and deepening of the class struggle in the main imperialist centers."

The detente, the resulting easing of the atmosphere of world political crisis focussed for years on the Vietnam war, has produced a certain downturn in mass mobilizations in the student sector, reinforcing tendencies toward both opportunism and ultraleftism.

"What we are witnessing today," states the resolution adopted by the delegates, "is the reaffirmation of the main historical contradiction of our epoch, the crisis of revolutionary leadership" — manifested in the counterrevolutionary role of Stalinism, of both Mao and Brezhnev varieties (e.g. Indochina, Indian subcontinent), the bankruptcy of Guevarism and the guerrilla war strategy (Bolivia, Argentina, Uruguay), the continuing trend of the social-democratic and labor-reformist leaderships in the imperialist countries toward integration into the apparatus of the bourgeois state through parliamentary and governmental experience.

The appearance of a "new vanguard layer of young radicals and revolutionary-minded youth, the advanced elements emerging from the developing social struggles," poses unique and unprecedented opportunities for the construction of mass revolutionary parties. The main challenge before the cadres of the Fourth International is to win and assimilate these youth, and train them in the method and strategy of the Transitional Program.

GROWING CLASS STRUGGLE

The report pointed to the increasing difficulties facing Canadian capitalism in a world characterized by heightened inter-imperialist rivalry. Canada is one of the largest imperialist powers without guaranteed access to foreign markets through membership in a common market structure. Its "special relationship" with U.S. capitalism — the result of the continental market and the high degree of interpenetration of capital between the two countries — is being undermined by growing U.S. protectionism. Whether it moves toward closer "integration" in the American market, or toward attempts to diversify foreign trade and investment, the Canadian bourgeoisie must step up the competitive capacity of Canadian manufacturing industries, that is, increase the rate of exploitation of Canadian workers. A general increase in the tempo and depth of the class struggle can be anticipated in the next period.

The main part of the political report analyzed the nature of the new radicalization of recent years, and how revolutionists can intervene in the mass movements to develop them along the road of anticapitalist struggle. (See separate article, this issue.)

AGAINST CANADIAN NATIONALISM

A major discussion has taken place in the League in recent months over the development of the mass nationalist sentiment in English Canada, much of it directed against the growing weight and influence of U.S. capital in the Canadian economy.

Most political tendencies in the left have attempted to identify with this sentiment, and even base their politics on it, in the belief that Canadian nationalism is an essentially progressive force. The Communist party has long made "Canadian independence" its vocation. The New Democratic

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Party has increasingly campaigned in defense of Canadian sovereignty. The NDP's left wing "Waffle" grouping split in Ontario last year; a large section, holding that the NDP's nationalism was insufficient, moved out of the party to set up a "Movement for an Independent Socialist Canada," convinced that a Canadian "independentist" movement would bring socialism quicker than any other strategy. Other groupings, such as the Maoist Communist Party of Canada (Marxist-Leninist) and Canadian Liberation Movement, have seen Canadian nationalism as central to their politics.

This was the most lively debate of the league's pre-convention period. No fewer than 28 written contributions on this theme were reproduced and circulated in English and French to members across the country. Debates on the topic were organized in all the branches, and representatives of the two main contending positions toured LSA-LSO branches from Montreal to Vancouver to defend their views.

The convention adopted by a vote of 39 to 5 (with 8 abstentions) the PC report presented by John Riddell, LSA / LSO executive secretary, and the resolution it was based on, "Canada and the Crisis of World Imperialism."

This resolution denied that Canada has become a colony of U.S. imperialism, or that its existence as an independent capitalist state has been ended through assimilation into the USA. It reaffirmed Canada's character as an imperialist country, ruled by the Canadian bourgeoisie.

As for Canadian nationalism — including support for Canadian independence, or for the "freeing" of Canada from "U.S. domination" — the resolution rejected any concept that this sentiment could be viewed as progressive, or as having an anti-capitalist dynamic.

In Quebec, nationalist consciousness has served to fuel the struggle against national oppression. But English Canada, far from being an oppressed nation like Quebec, is an imperialist power, and the oppressor of Quebec. Nationalism in English Canada is fundamentally an instrument of bourgeois rule, promoting class collaboration and the unity of the Canadian state.

The resolution recognized the existence of widespread nationalist conceptions among Canadian workers. Protests against the

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LSA/LSO convention

operations of capitalism, for example against a plant closure by a U.S. corporation, often take a nationalist form. The task of revolutionists is not to identify with this distorted nationalist form. They must advance a program linking with the real class issues at stake, and leading forward to anti-capitalist conclusions, while combatting nationalist illusions.

"Canada and the Crisis of World Imperialism" also evaluated the previous resolution of the LSA-LSO on this topic, "Canada-U.S. Relations," adopted by the 1968 convention. A first approximation in the analysis of a new and complex phenomenon, the 1968 resolution restated the imperialist character of the Canadian ruling class, its control of the Canadian state, and the reactionary character of Canadian nationalism.

It proved in error, however, in a central respect. It identified anti-U.S. feeling in Canada as an "anti-imperialist sentiment" of a progressive character. Experience showed this concept to be ambiguous and misleading, and that anti-U.S. sentiment contained an increasing element of Canadian nationalist patriotism.

A minority tendency that was formed primarily around this question of Canadian nationalism, advanced the view that there was a "new nationalism" with an essentially anticapitalist thrust — a unique phenomenon based on popular reaction against the "domination" of important sectors of the Canadian economy by U.S. capital. This tendency's views were rejected by the delegates in a vote of 5 for, 48 against, 0 abstentions.

Other key debates were those on the Quebec national liberation struggle and women's liberation, both major areas of intervention for the Trotskyist movement. (See articles, this issue)

The Quebec report noted that in the summer of 1972, a grouping led by Michel Mill split from the Ligue Socialiste Ouvriere and the Fourth International. They have since set themselves up as the Groupe Marxiste Revolutionnaire (GMR — Revolutionary Marxist Group). Several Quebec delegates noted that in recent labor and student struggles, the GMR had tail-ended the bureaucratic and conservative elements in the trade union and student leadership. In a united front committee to defend the jailed labor leaders, GMR leaders had opposed the proposal for a May Day mass trade union demonstration, claiming it was "premature." In the recent student strike at the Universite du Quebec a Montreal, the GMR had argued for a return to classes against the proposals of the Ligue des Jeunes Socialistes representative in the strike leadership to continue the strike.

TENDENCIES FORMED

All reports were adopted by a large majority of at least 75 percent of the delegates.

The convention was characterized by the fullest democracy in its procedures.

In addition to the United Tendency, which organized around the question of Canadian nationalism, with just under 10 percent of delegate support, there was another minority grouping, the Revolutionary Communist Tendency (RCT), supported by eight delegates. (Delegates are chosen by proportional representation in the branches.) Organized on a platform that represented a wide range of differences with the PC majority, the RCT presented counterposed positions under all the major political reports. (To permit the fullest, most effective presentation of the RCT's views, the convention suspended the normal rules of procedure on three reports to allow

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leading spokespersons of the RCT who were not delegates to present counter-reports.)

The RCT argued that some of the major areas of intervention of the LSA/ LSO and the Young Socialists — such as women's liberation, the student movement, the Quebecois nationalist movement — are "peripheral" to the class struggle, and urged that the League begin an immediate, aggressive turn toward "implantation" in the trade unions. Insofar as revolutionary cadres intervened in "peripheral" struggles like women's liberation, it should be as an essentially propagandist left wing. The League should not attempt to lead struggles for reforms, such as the campaign for abortion law repeal, but should direct these "peripheral" movements toward the organized working class. In student struggles, for instance, the revolutionaries should intervene primarily around themes like solidarity with workers' struggles and with the colonial revolution.

To the majority's projection of building broad class struggle caucuses in the unions and NDP around the key radicalizing issues of the day, the RCT comrades counterposed the building of organizations and "fronts" of League sympathizers and other revolutionaries within the traditional organizations of the working class. Those fronts or circles would act as a "transmission belt" for revolutionary ideas to the mass movement.

In Quebec, the Revolutionary Communist Tendency held that the struggle for independence and against national oppression can be "coopted" by the national bourgeoisie, and that revolutionists should therefore support independence only through an "explicitly anticapitalist program." While the majority held that as Quebecois workers develop political class consciousness, they are more inclined to take up the struggle against national oppression, the RCT argued that nationalist demands (such as defence of the French language) become subordinated to class demands.

On Canadian nationalism, the RCT denounced the majority for what it termed their "ultraleft-abstract calls of 'workers of the world unite.' " It held that Canadian nationalism is mainly confined to the liberal petty-bourgeoisie, that the working class is "relatively indifferent" to it, that the bourgeoisie has little use for nationalism "because its main thrust is directed against the project to which the bourgeoisie is most committed, the further integration of the North American economy," and that if the bourgeoisie were to promote nationalism at some time in the future, its clearly reactionary use as a defence of the existing order would be unlikely to win it mass support.

The RCT's views were rejected by a large majority of the delegates.

At the end of the convention, the Majority Tendency, which had been organized in support of the positions of the PC majority on Canadian nationalism and the discussion in the Fourth International, announced its dissolution. The United Tendency did likewise. The Revolutionary Communist Tendency declared it would continue to exist as an organized tendency.

photo by MacInnis

JOAN NEWBIGGING, Vancouver organizer of LSA and member of convention's presiding committee, chaired special sessions at which $6,000 was raised toward expansion of League's activities.

LEADERSHIP ELECTED

The convention concluded with the election of a new Central Committee (CC) and Control Commission.

The slate of CC members proposed by the nominating commission was adopted unanimously by the delegates. The new Central Committee has 35 members, including 14 women. Five are members of the RCT, three were previously members of the United Tendency.

A post-convention plenary meeting of the CC elected the following as officers: Ross Dowson, chairman; John Riddell, executive secretary, and Art Young, organizational secretary.

This convention marked a significant broadening of the leadership cadre of the Canadian Trotskyist movement, reflecting the rapid political development of the new young forces recruited to revolutionary Marxism out of the current radicalization. The majority of the delegates — 39 out of the 53 — were between the ages of 22 and 30. For 15 of them, it was their first convention; for another 23, only their second.

Of the 29 consultative delegates on the outgoing Central Committee, almost all had been in the movement for at least five years and a few for up to 35 years or more. Thus the leading cadre of the Canadian section encompasses a wide range of experience in the class struggle.

While the League orients strongly to the youth radicalization, its membership is heavily working class in composition. Of the delegates, 37 were workers, including six teachers and nine unemployed. Six were in trade unions. Nine were students, six work full time on the movement staff, and one was a farmer.

One of the highlights of the convention was a special session to launch an expansion fund to build up certain aspects of the League's internal operations. To start if off right, delegates raised some $6,000 from among themselves, as well as five typewriters, an automobile — and one delegate even donated a private airplane!

In a separate report on literature sales, it was reported that sales of Trotskyist literature in bookstores and on campuses by Crescent Publications, the Canadian distributors for Pathfinder Books, were up 100 percent in 1972 over the year before, and already this year are running 50 percent ahead of last year — an indication of the widespread and growing interest in Trostkyist views among the young radicals today.

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Canadian nationalism vital to capitalist rule

The convention reporter on the resolution, "Canada and the Crisis of World Imperialism," was John Riddell, executive secretary of the LSA-LSO. The following is an extract from his report.

The Political Committee draft resolution, "Canada and the Crisis of World Imperialism," presents four main ideas.

First, it examines the main trends of imperialist development on a world scale: the increasing interpenetration of trade and investment, the rise of competition among imperialist powers. It concludes that Canada is not exempt from these trends and these contradictions.

One feature of modern imperialist development is the emergence of trading blocks, and close alliances among imperialist powers, which nonetheless retain their independent control over separate nation-states. The development of the "special relationship" between Canada and the United States has preceeded far along this path.

The resolution denies, however, that this has changed the fundamental character of Canadian capitalism. It denies that capitalism in North America has been able to abolish the border, to overcome the contradiction between the international character of capitalist production, on the one hand, and the national limits of the capitalist state on the other.

The Canadian ruling class is thus an imperialist bourgeoisie, with highly monopolized holdings concentrated in Canada.

It is in control of the Canadian state, a highly centralized and efficient mechanism for the defense of its class interests.

photo by MacInnis

JOHN RIDDELL, executive secretary of LSA/LSO.

The Canadian bourgeoisie has its own national interests, distinct from those of the U.S. ruling class, and it utilizes the Canadian state to defend these interests to the best of its ability.

The second proposition of "Canada and the Crisis of World Imperialism" concerns the general character of nationalism, and its specific role in English Canada today.

It defines nationalism as the identification with the nation, its independence and its culture,the belief that the nation as a whole has common problems or goals, and the concept that a common struggle for these goals is called for. It examines the role of nationalism in different historical epochs, and in different sectors of the world today.

In general, the resolution states, national consciousness has a progressive character only where it promotes the struggle against aspects of national oppression suffered by a people. In other words, nationalism is progressive when it corresponds to real national tasks (the winning of national independence, establishment of a national language, etc.) left unachieved by the bourgeois revolution, and which can now be achieved in their totality only through socialist revolution.

In imperialist nations, which suffer no national oppression, nationalism can only pay a fundamentally reactionary role, blunting the cutting edge of the class struggle. This has been and remains the case for Canada.

The Canadian bourgeoisie can employ nationalist demagogy of an anti-U.S. variety in support of its negotiating positions in its conflicts with U.S. imperialism, to rally workers to its class-collaborationist line (as for example in the event of the imposition of wage controls), to help head off developing class consciousness, and fracture the organization of workers along class lines.

Third, the resolution demonstrates how revolutionists must examine the real impact of U.S. investment on Canada, and not accept uncritically the nationalist view of its significance. They must base their program on the real, objective situation before the working class, on the objective tasks before the masses.

Our program and our intervention, it states, cannot be founded on the desire to identify with the sentiments and aspirations of the masses, except insofar as these correspond to the real objective needs of the working class and its allies.

If English Canadian nationalism does not correspond to any such objective needs, than it cannot have a progressive character.

The fourth proposition of the resolution, "Canada and the Crisis of World Imperialism," consists of a discussion of how revolutionary socialists should intervene in a radicalization which is dominated by nationalist illusions.

We must intervene effectively and adroitly, it explains, in the debate and ferment around the question of U.S. investment, Canadian independence, "U.S. domination." We must do so along these lines:

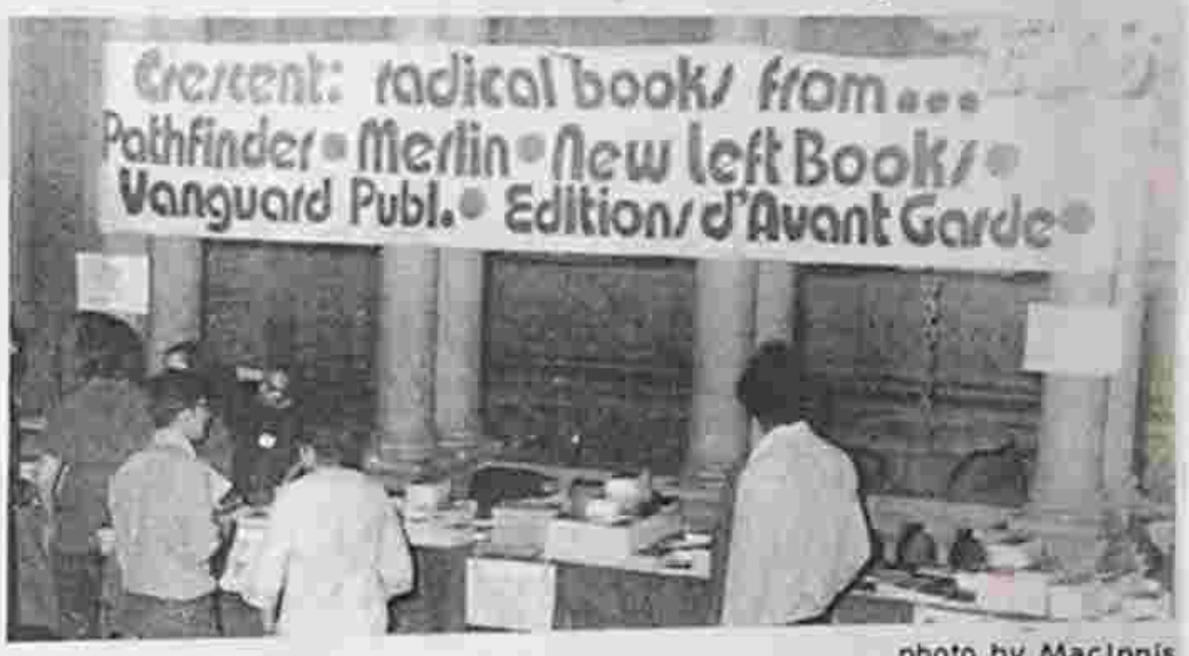

photo by MacInnis

LITERATURE DISPLAY sold some $800 of revolutionary pamphlets and books.

a) We defend the real class interests of the working people. Where workers have national illusions, or voice their social indignation in a nationalist form, we do not identify with the nationalism of the workers, but with the real class interests which underly their reactions.

b) We put forward a class struggle program aimed at showing workers in life that the enemy is at home — the Canadian ruling class — and to lead and direct their struggle against this ruling class.

c) We oppose Canadian nationalism, including its anti-U.S. expression. We oppose patriotism, the concept that Canadians should unite against U.S. domination, that Canadians should struggle together for Canadian independence, to defend Canadian culture, build a Canadian identity. We combat nationalist illusions in the working class.

LSA deplores split in Trotskyist ranks

by ART YOUNG

Organizational Secretary, LSA LSO

During the month of June, a split took place in the Canadian Trotskyist movement, when 25 members left the League for Socialist Action/ Ligue Socialiste Ouvriere and the Young Socialists/ Ligue des Jeunes Socialistes. The splitters include one member of the Central Committee of the LSA/ LSO, Bob Mills, and four members of the Executive Council of the YS/ LJS, including Sue Genge and Bob Woodworth of Peterborough.

The splitters had the same political views and gave the same reasons for quitting, although they left in four separate groups.

The League is the Canadian section of the Fourth International, world party of the socialist revolution founded by Leon Trotsky in 1938. The YS/ LJS is a revolutionary socialist youth organization in political solidarity with the League. It is therefore the sympathizing youth organization of the International in Canada. By leaving the section and its youth movement, the splitters have left the Fourth International.

Revolutionary socialists insist on the unity of the Trotskyist movement because of the nature of their task, and the measures required to achieve it. The aim is to gather the forces to build a revolutionary combat party, capable of leading the working class and its allies to victory in the struggle for power in this country. This demands the careful subordination of personal and factional considerations to the need to unite the revolutionary cadres in this historic task. The pressures of capitalism and the difficulties of the struggle tend to disperse and divide the revolutionary forces; revolutionaries strive consciously to unite them, and look on attacks on the unity of the movement as a betrayal of the party-building task.

Trotskyism does not seek to unite with everyone. It broke with the Stalinist Third International when that organization capitulated to Hitler and so proved to be degenerate and incapable of correcting its errors. The revolutionary movement must also on occasion defend itself through disciplinary action against disloyal elements. And while it opposes unprincipled splits, it is equally opposed to unprincipled or unprepared unifications which would endanger the integrity of the revolutionary organization or its program.

A DEMOCRATIC DEBATE

The Trotskyist movement is founded on its historically established principles and program. This is the guarantee of the unity of the organization. When differences arise, as they do in any organization confronting the new tasks continually posed by the class struggle, they are resolved on the basis of fundamental concepts, through a process of democratic discussion and decision by the membership. While the party can commit errors, it is united by confidence in its capacity to correct them — a capacity based on the fact that errors will be revealed by the test of experience, and corrected through applying our basic program and principles. To rupture this party-building process through split is one of the gravest crimes against the Trotskyist movement.

The split in the Canadian Trotskyist movement began only six weeks after the convention of the section, which concluded a wide-ranging and rich internal discussion. The convention, originally scheduled for September 1972 was twice postponed to facilitate clarification of disputed questions. The Revolutionary Communist Tendency, to which the splitters from the League belonged, was one of two minority groups that advanced positions in this debate counterposed to those of the majority of the Political Committee.

All contending points of view were discussed in the branches, and organized tendencies were invited to tour all branches to present their positions; each of the three contending platforms was put to a vote in the branches, and delegates were elected by proportional representation. In the convention itself, equal time was granted for the presentation of minority points of view, and convention rules were several times relaxed to ensure that every dissident point of view received adequate opportunity to be heard.

The discussion in the youth organization prior to and at its January convention was equally democratic. The views represented by the splitters received less than ¼ of the votes at the youth convention, and one-seventh at the convention of the League. In both conventions, the issues were clarified and the membership spoke with decisive voice. Both were models of internal democracy in a movement based on the Leninist norms of organization.

The splitters did not attempt to justify their break by alleging any lack of democracy. Rather they charged that the League had a policy of refusing to recruit persons who disagreed with many of its policies but whose views were similar to those of the minority within the organization. This "factional recruitment," they held, was practised against members of the Young Socialists and against the Rd Circle and Old Mole groupings.

The charge is utterly false. In

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reality, the League has recruited a number of members of the YS holding minority views. Significantly, the majority of those who split while alleging "factional recruitment" had recently applied to join the League but they split before their applications could even be considered.

UNITY ATTEMPT FAILS

The League has been involved in an attempt to achieve closer relations and eventual unity with two small groups, the Old Mole and Red Circle, for over half a year. The Red Circle originates in the left wing of the NDP. In the process of the struggle against the reformist NDP bureaucracy and the nationalist leadership of the Waffle, this group came to revolutionary socialist positions. Considering themselves supporters of the Fourth International, they approached the League with a proposal for fusion. The League responded by opening discussions with the group as a whole in order to determine their views. It soon became apparent that there were wide disagreements between the two organizations over questions of vital importance.

The Old Mole for its part developed at the University of Toronto, as a student group in opposition to other campus groups including the U of T Young Socialists. Despite the fact that its positions had evolved some distance towards revolutionary socialism, wide disagreements also separated it from the League and the YS.

But the existence of such wide differences did not in itself mean that unity was impossible. Their real import could only be tested in life, through attempts to work together. The League sought to work with the Old Mole and Red Circle in common actions and campaigns, in the hope that this would lead to a rapprochement and lay the basis for an eventual unification. But the result was just the opposite. As the Old Mole and Red Circle moved closer to each other, they moved further and further away from the League. No common work materialized. Instead, different political lines were sharply counterposed in virtually every major field of activity.

This was the decisive test.

If the League and these groups could not find a single area in which they could do revolutionary work together what hope was there that they would prove able to work together inside a common democratic-centralist organization active in many different fields? Clearly there was no basis for immediate unification.

The League suggested rather to both groups that we pursue more actively their attempts to collaborate wherever possible. Unfortunately, these attempts have been no more successful than in the past.

RMG SUPPORTS SPLIT

On May 25, the Old Mole and Red Circle announced their fusion, becoming the Revolutionary Marxist Group. Soon after, the split began in the Trotskyist movement, with the splitters declaring that they were leaving in order to build the RMG. The RMG Political Committee endorsed their split. In a letter to the LSA/ LSO dated June 25, their PC states its view that "it is not the comrades who resigned (from the League and the YS/ LJS) whose actions are damaging to the unity of the world Trotskyist movement." The PC suggests that the splits were provoked by the leaderships of the YS/ LJS and LSA/ LSO, repeating the charges levelled by the splitters. In addition, the RMG states that it is "at present engaged in a process of recruitment discussions with them," indicating that their recruitment to the RMG is probable.

This attitude on the part of the RMG to those who have just struck a blow against the Canadian Trotskyist movement, placing themselves outside and in opposition to it, is a hostile act against the LSA/ LSO. While the League has dealt with the Old Mole and Red Circle as organized groups, making no attempt to recruit individual members from them, these organizations, now fused in the RMG, have sponsored a split in the Trotskyist movement. Far from promoting the "unity" of the Trotskyist movement, they have conducted a raid on the Canadian section of the Fourth International and its youth organization.

The League for its part regrets these developments which pose a new obstacle to the achievement of unity of revolutionary socialist forces in Canada. It will nevertheless continue to seek areas in which the LSA/ LSO and the RMG can collaborate. Attempts must be made to reverse the process of growing division between the groups. At the same time, the political discussions between the organizations cannot remain centered on small meetings between leaders of the two groups. They must proceed in such a way as to permit the participation of the members of both organizations as well as others on the left.

In its coming issues Labor Challenge will publish a number of articles examining in a systematic fashion the differences between the RMG and the Canadian Trotskyist movement.

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Joe Burki, pioneer revolutionary socialist

Joseph Burki is dead.

Almost three years ago, Joe, though badly crippled and tortured by arthritis, came from his farm in Sangudo, Alberta to Saskatoon to talk to some friends. They were all considerably younger than himself, and their experience had been quite different from his own. Some of them were university students, active in the new youth radicalization, the anti-Vietnam-war movement, women's liberation. Others were of an older generation, veterans of the radicalization that came out of the high anticipation for a new society, following the second world-wide imperialist slaughter.

But they were all comrades, above all because they shared some profound concepts of the nature of Canadian society and what should be done about it. They were Joe's type of people — revolutionary socialists. Above all, they were the product of his life and work for socialism.

Joe died on Thursday Nov. 29. With the scourge of arthritis so far down on the order sheet of medical science under the grip of capitalism, it had become obvious over the past period that all he had ahead of him were years of immobility. So his end contained an element of release — for everyone — including those who owe the most important aspect of their lives to him.

He ended his short talk to his comrades of the Saskatoon branch of the League for Socialist Action with the words: "From here on, you all know what took place."

In his talk he told his comrades about where they had come from. He told them about his life, prior to his meeting them as individuals in recent years. He told them of the beginnings of Trotskyism on the Prairies.

Joe came to America as a naive youth from Switzerland some years before World War I. He knew nothing about socialism, but he soon got a taste of capitalism working on ranches in the western states and in the Butte copper mines. That taste was enough to convince him that the American way of life was not worth fighting for. He took advantage of an agreement between the Swiss and U.S. governments that would exempt Swiss citizens from U.S. military service, should they sign away all claims to U.S. citizenship. "So," he said, "I took the easy way out and signed the statement. By that time I was class conscious, but I did not yet understand that there was a system in operation working against us — the capitalist system."

Joe crossed the border into Canada to come up north to the small community of Lloydminster, Alta. There in July 1920 he bought 160 of the millions of acres of land that the Canadian government, after expelling the Indians, had handed over to the CPR. In order to get money for seed and equipment Joe went to work in the mines. At a coal mine operation just east of Edmonton, he met George Faulkner.

George was a tireless agitator for socialism. George's explanations of how capitalism worked clarified the thousands of problems that had been puzzling Joe for years, and opened up the world of books — revolutionary theory.

Faulkner introduced Burki at the first opportunity to the Edmonton headquarters of the Socialist Party of Canada (SPC) and its stock of the basic writings of Karl Marx and Frederick Engels. From then on, Joe was a profound student of economics.

Only a few years ago, when he returned to Switzerland for a holiday, despite his difficulty in getting around, he made a point of visiting Ernest Mandel in Brussels, author of the famed two-volume work Marxist Economic Theory, to exchange views on some finer points. The editorial board of the Young Socialist will never forget the hassle he gave them a few years back on the causes of present-day inflation.

Joe was strong on ideas, and he soon transcended the SPC for its weaknesses in practice. It did not understand the centrality of building a revolutionary party.

Joe joined the United Farmers of Alberta and met other militants such as Karl Axelson, a former member of the IWW in Minnesota, farming a short distance away in Streamstown. They organized a unit of the Farmers Unity League and soon came into contact with the Communist party. Joe made many trips to Saskatoon and Edmonton to learn from the youthful cadres of the CP there what they knew about the Russian Revolution, the Third International and the views of its chief spokesmen, Lenin and Trotsky.

Burki and Axelson succeeded in organizing a CP branch of about a dozen members and quite a few sympathizers in the Lloydminster area; in the 1935 elections they ran a candidate who rallied about 700 votes.

Joe became puzzled by the garbled information about disputes within the Russian Communist party, and the venomous material that began to be issued against Trotsky. He was having increasing run-ins with CP leaders in Edmonton. He met other dissidents in Saskatoon who showed him some copies of literature being published by the American Trotskyists, among them Trotsky's Criticism of the Draft Program of the Communist International, which had been smuggled out of the Sixth World Congress of the Communist International by the American delegate James P. Cannon and Canadian delegate and CP leader, Maurice Spector.

From that and other literature Joe began studying, he came to understand the roots of Stalinism and the degeneration of the Communist party of Canada under Tim Buck. He resigned from the CP. Although the CP reorganized the new party branch to prevent him from explaining his views to the membership, he did manage to find some cothinkers in the McDonnells and one or two others near Streamstown. "We had no organization," Joe said, "(but) only books and periodicals which we lent around and (we) talked with people where we could."

He related how they came into increasingly frequent contact with Trotskyists in Toronto and Vancouver who were consolidating an educational league toward building the nucleus for a revolutionary socialist party. Through their press, and growing numbers of visits, things started to jell. "This is how Trotskyism started on the Prairies — from here on you know what took place," he ended his talk.

Thanks to many, but particularly to Joe Burki, it got started. We know where it is now, and we know what we have to do to take it forward to victory.

—MARIA FISCHER with R.D.

labor Challenge #94 - Feb. 4, 1974

—IN REVIEW—

The NDP -- The Marxist View

THE NDP—THE MARXIST VIEW. Vanguard Publications, Toronto. Distributed by Pathfinder Press, 25 Bulwer St., Toronto 2B. 50 cents.

With its recently-published pamphlet, **The NDP — The Marxist View**, Vanguard Publications makes available three major articles, reprinted from **Labor Cahllenge**, which provide a useful introduction to the revolutionary Marxist analysis of the New Democratic Party.

For activists in the student or women's liberation movements in search of avenues by which their struggles can be linked to those of the working class, this pamphlet offers important advice. For NDP activists fighting to make the party more responsive to workers' needs, confronting over and over again the hostility of the NDP brass to class-struggle policies, **The NDP — The Marxist View** provides a welcome explanation of the barrier to socialism constituted by the NDP leadership, and the inadequacy of the party as an instrument for socialist victory. Moreover, it provides a guide to action in bringing that lesson to the working masses in the course of their struggles against capitalism.

The pamphlet includes excerpts from the Political Resolution adopted by the April 1973 convention of the League for Socialist Action / Ligue Socialiste Ouvriere. The excerpts encompass a description of the LSA's orientation to the NDP, a capsule analysis of the experience of revolutionists with the Waffle movement in the NDP, and a projection of the overall tasks of revolutionary socialists in the NDP in the next period.

Publication of these excerpts in the July 23, 1973 **Labor Challenge** sparked an exchange with Ontario NDP provincial secretary, Gordon Vichert. In a letter to **Labor Challenge** editor George Addison, Vichert announced that steps were being taken to expel Addison from the NDP on the grounds of his revolutionary views. Vichert's letter, and a reply by Dick Fidler, a member of the LSA / LSO Political Committee and a frequent contributor to **Labor Challenge**, are included in the pamphlet.

The final article included in the pamphlet is based on a speech by Ross Dowson, now chairman of the LSA/ LSO, to the St. George (Toronto) NDP riding association, defining in a popular manner, the Trotskyist attitude to the NDP. Particularly noteworthy is Dowson's hard-hitting attack on "the parliamentary road to socialism."

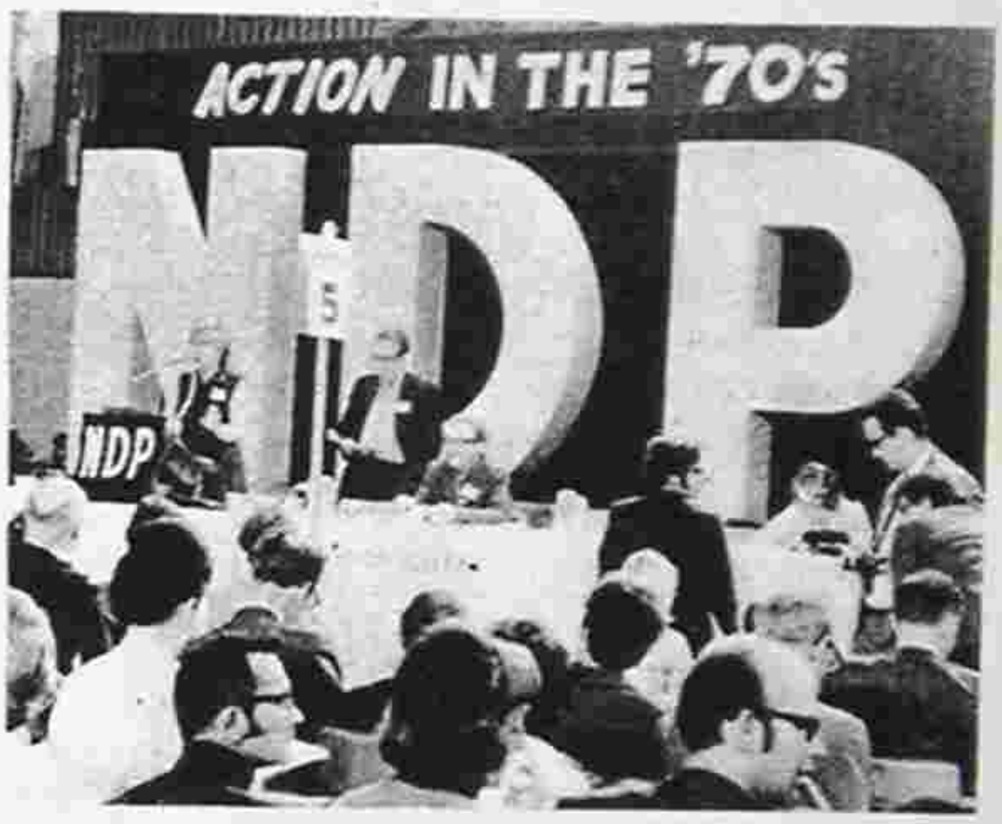
"The New Democratic Party is a labor party," notes the LSA/ LSO Political Resolution, "both in terms of its close and organic ties to the organized labor movement of English Canada, and because of its character as the sole political mass organization of the working class."

Providing, as it does, an avenue for political action independent of big business and its parties, the NDP receives the critical support of revolutionary Marxists. In his reply to Gordon Vichert, Dick Fidler defends the right of all those who support the principle of independent labor political action to membership in the NDP. "We work to strengthen the party's labor base, urging trade unions to affiliate, signing working people into the party and urging them to help build it," he explains.

Opposition to the NDP guarantees its proponents sectarian isolation from the mass of working people. The influence of the Communist party in the working class has been reduced in large measure, the pamphlet points out, because of the Stalinists' consistent opposition to independent labor political action through the NDP. Yet other tendencies on the left — most recently the Waffle — repeat the Stalinists' error in their opposition to the labor party.

Revolutionists support the NDP, the pamphlet explains, despite the labor party's reformist program and leadership. As the Political Resolution describes it, "This leadership's outlook is one of gradual, piecemeal, parliamentary reform of capitalism, combined with readiness to rally to the defense of Canadian capitalism against any radical challenge . . . ."

While the NDP leadership is not incapable of far-reaching action to defend its social base, it takes such action only hesitantly, falteringly, and under the massive pressure of the ranks. On a day-to-day basis, the resolution argues,



"the reformist program of the NDP stands in constant contradiction to the fundamental needs of the class, which demand mass anticapitalist action, guided by a class-struggle perspective and a socialist program aimed not at the reform of capitalism but at its overthrow."

Hence, the ranks of the labor movement are inevitably thrown into conflict with their social-democratic misleaders. As the radicalization broadens and deepens within the working class, posing and promoting the necessity of an alternative, revolutionary leadership, it will be sharply reflected within the NDP.

In that recognition, revolutionists "join the NDP and intervene in it, in order to go through the experience of struggle against reformism in the NDP along with the working class, to participate in the battles and political differentiation which takes place within the NDP, to promote the building of a class-struggle caucus, and win forces to the revolutionary vanguard organization."

The NDP cannot be transformed into the party of the Canadian revolution. To the contrary, the revolutionary party "will be built in the struggle against the reformism of the NDP and the trade-union leadership — a struggle which now unfolds in and around the NDP, and which will continue in the coming period to maintain the NDP as its frame of reference."

The lessons contained in **The NDP — The Marxist View**, reflecting the long experience of the League for Socialist Action, are indispensable for the effective intervention of revolutionists in the class struggle as it unfolds in Canada in the next period.

— RAY WARDEN

Challenge

18 members of LSA/LSO announce resignation

by JOHN RIDDELL

A group of 18 members announced their resignation from the League for Socialist Action/Ligue Socialiste Ouvriere (LSA/LSO) on Feb. 19.

Among them was one member of the LSA/LSO central committee, Ross Dowson, a prominent leader in building the Canadian Trotskyist movement during and after World War II. For more than 20 years, he was its executive secretary, and made a key contribution to the rapid growth of the LSA/LSO in the 1960s, and the emergence of a new generation of younger leaders. In 1972 he resigned as executive secretary, nominating John Riddell for election to this post, and accepted the position of chairman of the League.

The 18 explained their walkout in a statement which cited criticisms on four questions of policy adopted by the majority of LSA/LSO members.

The statement holds that the LSA/LSO has failed to recognize the development of a "new Canadian nationalism" in recent years. Ross Dowson, leading spokesman for the 18, and others of the group, were among members of the "United Tendency," a minority grouping in the LSA/LSO which argued this view at the April, 1973 convention of the League.

They called on the League to "identify with" this nationalist anti-U.S. sentiment, which they considered to be "essentially progressive," and to have an "anti-capitalist dynamic."

The question of English-Canadian nationalism was hotly debated in all the branches of the League in the months before the convention, and their pro-Canadian-nationalist position was rejected by a vote of 90 percent of the membership.

The resolution, "Canada and the Crisis of World Imperialism," was adopted by a wide margin. It maintains the longstanding Marxist position that nationalism in imperialist nations like English Canada is reactionary in character, and serves to reinforce capitalist rule.

The walkout statement of the 18 also charges that the LSA/LSO's "longstanding orientation to the NDP ... has been subverted." They consider the LSA/LSO's criticisms of the NDP leadership's policies to have been unrealistic and exaggerated. They hold that the League's policy on the NDP, one of critical support, is marked by sectarian hostility to the party. The statement stresses their disagreement with the LSA/LSO's definition of the procapitalist character of the Barrett government in B.C.

The statement claims that some "basic positions" of an LSA/LSO resolution of 1968 on Quebec have been "revised." It charges that "our work in women's liberation has become unhinged." But the group has never indicated the nature of its views on these questions, either while members of the League or at the time of its walkout.

The 18 do not claim that any of the LSA/LSO's positions have violated principles of revolutionary Marxism. They do not claim that the disagreements they note were so great as to require a break from the organization. They did not make a serious attempt to present their views to the LSA/LSO membership, in order to attempt to win the support of a majority, and to correct political errors which they believed they had spotted.

Only six weeks before their walkout, the 18 joined with some other members of the League in presenting a document outlining their criticisms of the League's policy on the NDP. The document was distributed to the membership, and the next steps in pursuing this discussion were being planned.

Yet the eighteen walked out of the LSA/LSO, rather than participate in this discussion. Nor did they await the projected resumption of an organized discussion of the question of Canadian nationalism, where the contending views could be measured against the test of experience.

They hold that the LSA/LSO has "adapted to the ultra-left pressures of the new radicalization" to such a degree that it has "degenerated into a sect," and can no longer serve to build a revolutionary organization.

The 18 claim to be partisans of "a Fourth International," of unspecified character. But they believe the real, living Fourth International, the world Trotskyist movement, is undermined by the same process as the League, its Canadian section. They cite the "ultraleft pressures ... which are tearing at the vitals of the component organizations of the Fourth International."

It is not clear how the 18 came to the conclusion that the LSA/LSO was degenerated beyond hope of reform, since they refused to carry out the discussions among League members which would permit any errors in the League's policy to be brought to light, and to be corrected.

Their walkout cannot be justified or explained on the basis of their political disagreements. Rather it indicates they had come to reject the Trotskyist view that a revolutionary organization can only be built around the living forces of revolutionary Marxism — forces brought together over past decades in the ranks of the national organizations of the Fourth International.

Their walkout shows that they now believe the problem of building a revolutionary organization will be resolved in a different way — by some method other than the one laid down by Lenin and Trotsky. It represents a withdrawal from the active struggle to build a revolutionary organization on the Bolshevik model in Canada today.